CHRISTMASTIDE

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CHRISTMASTIDE

CONTAINING

FOUR FAMOUS POEMS BY FAVORITE AMERICAN POETS

With Illustrations

BOSTON:
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY.
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ENGRAVED BY A. V. S. ANTHONY.

THE RIVER PATH.

"The tangled bank below was still" . . . . T. MORAN.

"No rustle from the birchen stem" . . . . WM. HART.

"The dusk of twilight round us grew" . . . J. A. BROWN.

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"A tender glow, exceeding fair" . . . . . J. A. BROWN.

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"While dark, through willowy vistas seen" . . J. MCENTEE.

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"The hills swung open to the light" . . . . S. COLMAN.

"Down glade and glen and bank it rolled" . . W. HART.

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"The grapes hung purpling in the grange" . . F. T. Merrill.

"Her lissome form more perfect grew" . . . Jessie Curtis.

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We saw a slender ring of flame" . . . . . Jessie Curtis.

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"We saw its shadow ere it fell" . . . . . Jessie Curtis.

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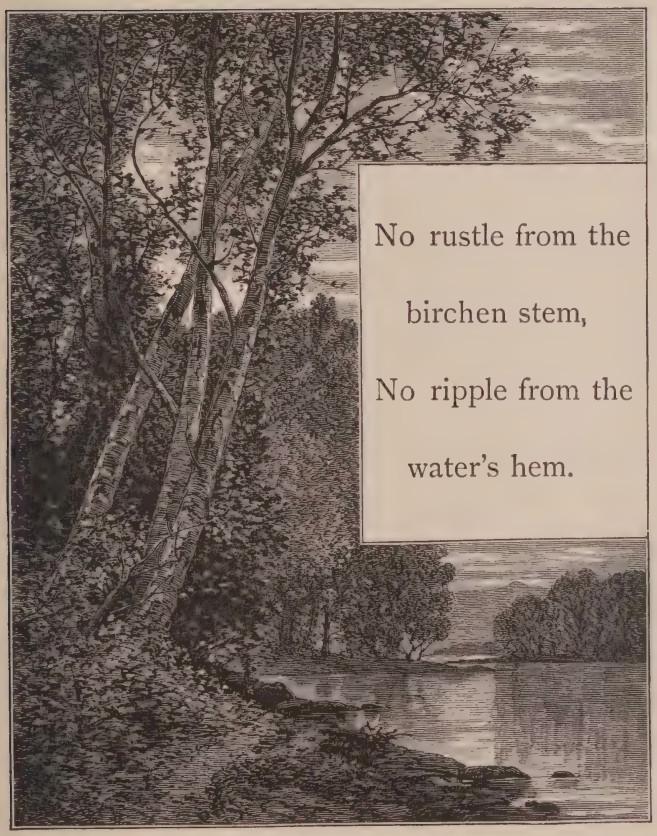
THE RIVER PATH

THE RIVER PATH.

No bird-song floated down the hill,

The tangled bank below was still;

The River Path.



The River Path.

The dusk of twilight round us grew,

We felt the falling of the dew;

For, from us, ere the day was done,

The wooded hills shut out the sun.

The River Path.

But on the river's farthest side

We saw the hilltops glorified, —

The River Path.

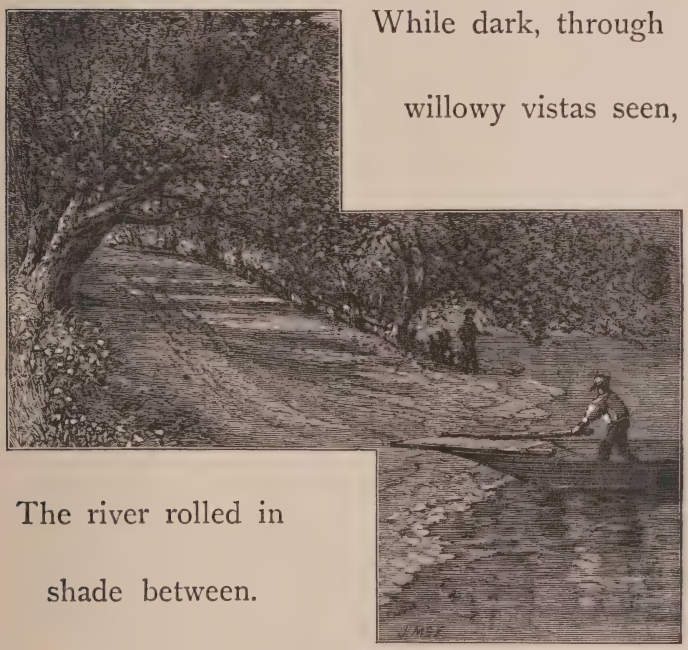
A tender glow, exceeding fair,

A dream of day without its glare.

The River Path.

With us the damp, the chill, the gloom:

With them the sunset's rosy bloom;



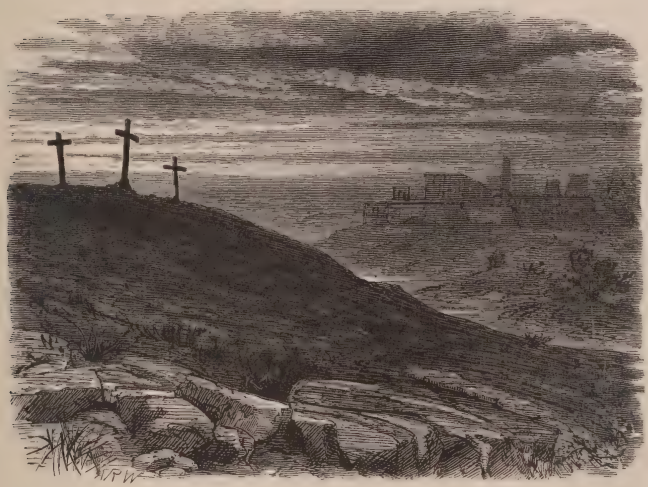
While dark, through willowy vistas seen,

The river rolled in shade between.

The River Path.

From out the darkness where we trod,

We gazed upon those hills of God,



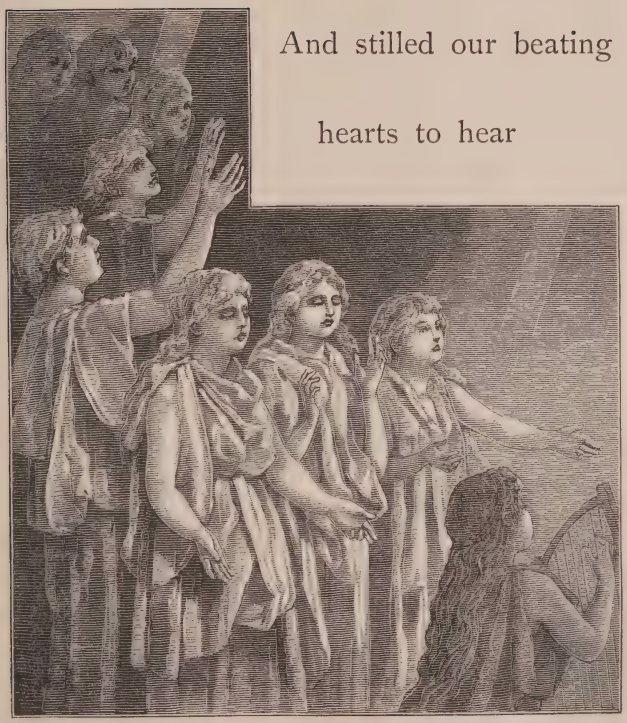
Whose light seemed not of moon or sun.

We spake not, but our thought was one.

The River Path.

We paused, as if from that bright shore

Beckoned our dear ones gone before;



And stilled our beating

hearts to hear

The voices lost to mortal ear!

The River Path.

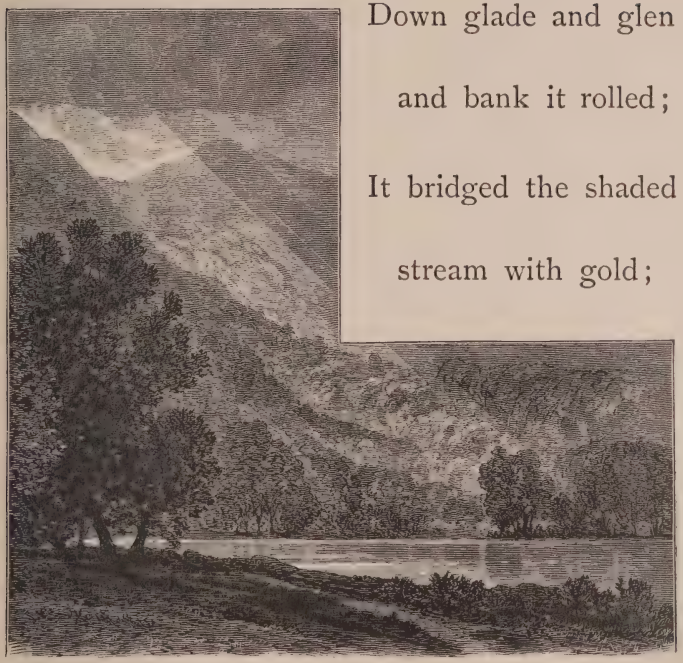
Sudden our pathway turned from night;

The hills swung open to the light;

Through their green gates the sunshine showed,

A long, slant splendor downward flowed.

The River Path.



Down glade and glen
and bank it rolled;
It bridged the shaded
stream with gold;

And, borne on piers of mist, allied
The shadowy with the sunlit side!

The River Path.

"So," prayed we, "when our feet draw near

The river dark, with mortal fear,

"And the night cometh chill with dew,

O Father! let thy light break through!

"So let the hills of doubt divide,

So bridge with faith the sunless tide!

"So let the eyes that fail on earth

On thy eternal hills look forth;

The River Path.

"And in thy beckoning angels know

The dear ones whom we loved below!"

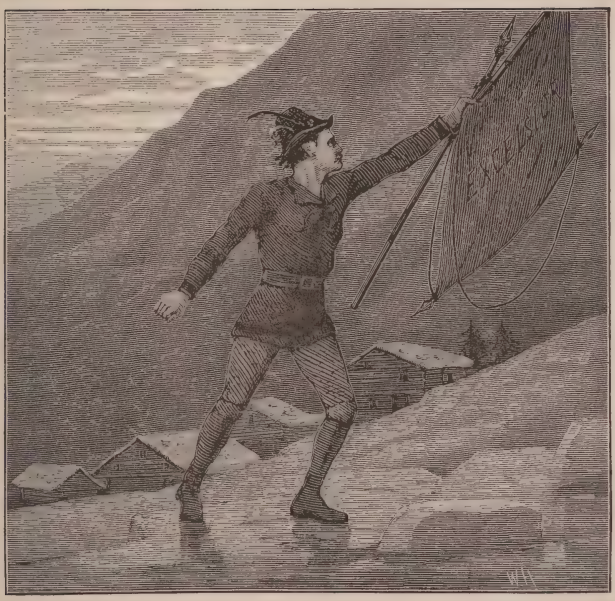
ACCLESTER

EXCELSIOR.

The shades of night were falling fast,

As through an Alpine village passed

Excelsior.



A youth, who bore, mid snow and ice,

A banner with the strange device,

Excelsior!

Excelsior.

His brow was sad; his eye beneath

Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,

And like a silver clarion rung

The accents of that unknown tongue,

Excelsior!

Excelsior.

In happy homes he saw the light

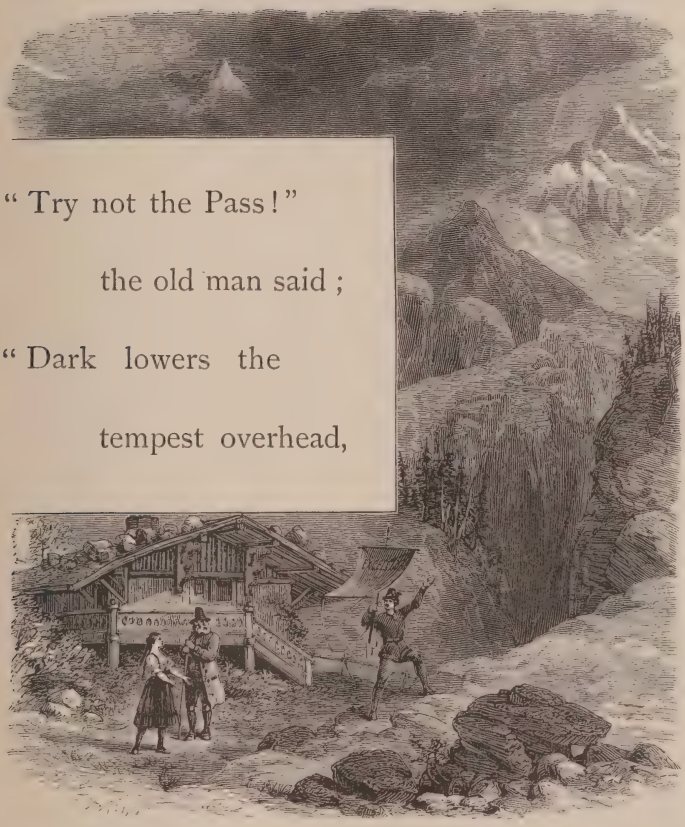
Of household fires gleam warm and bright.

Above, the spectral glaciers shone,

And from his lips escaped a groan,

Excelsior!

Excelsior.


"Try not the Pass!"
the old man said;
"Dark lowers the
tempest overhead,

The roaring torrent 's deep and wide!"

And loud that clarion voice replied,

Excelsior!

Excelsior.

"O stay," the maiden said, "and rest

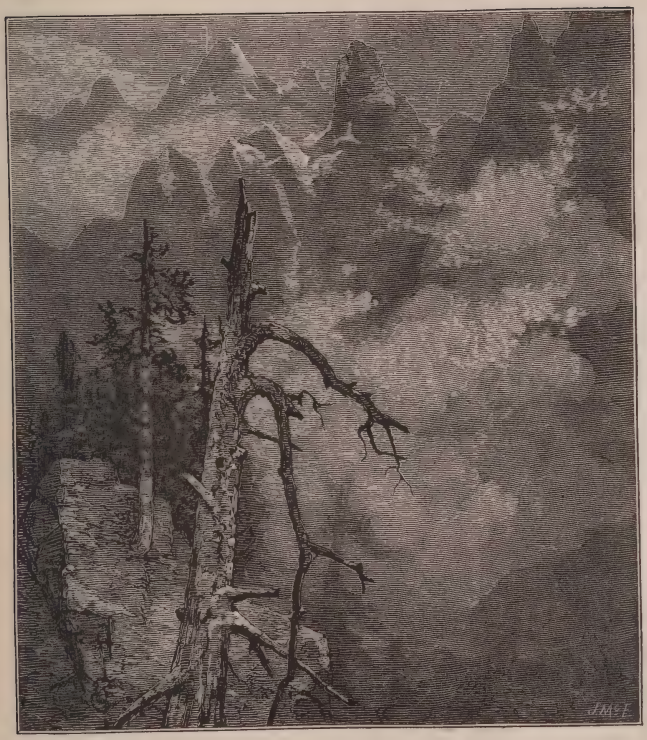
Thy weary head upon this breast!"

A tear stood in his bright blue eye,

But still he answered, with a sigh,

Excelsior!

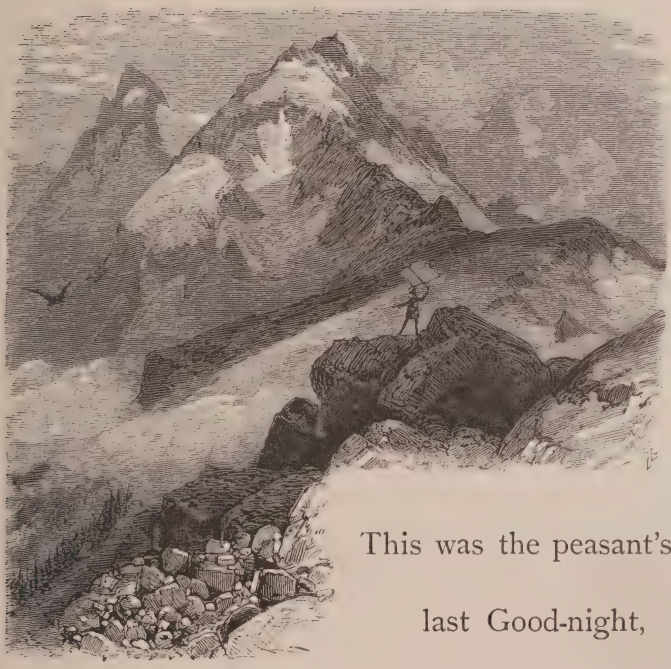
Excelsior.



"Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!

Beware the awful avalanche!"

Excelsior.



This was the peasant's

last Good-night,

A voice replied far up the height,

Excelsior!

Excelsior.

At break of day, as heavenward

The pious monks of Saint Bernard

Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,

Excelsior.

A voice cried through the startled air,

Excelsior!

Excelsior.

A traveller, by the faithful hound,

Half-buried in the snow was found,

Still grasping in his hand of ice

That banner with the strange device,

Excelsior!

Excelsior.

There in the twilight cold and gray,

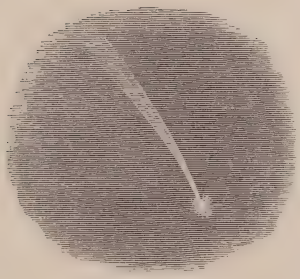
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,

Excelsior.

And from the sky, serene and far,

A voice fell, like a falling star,

Excelsior!

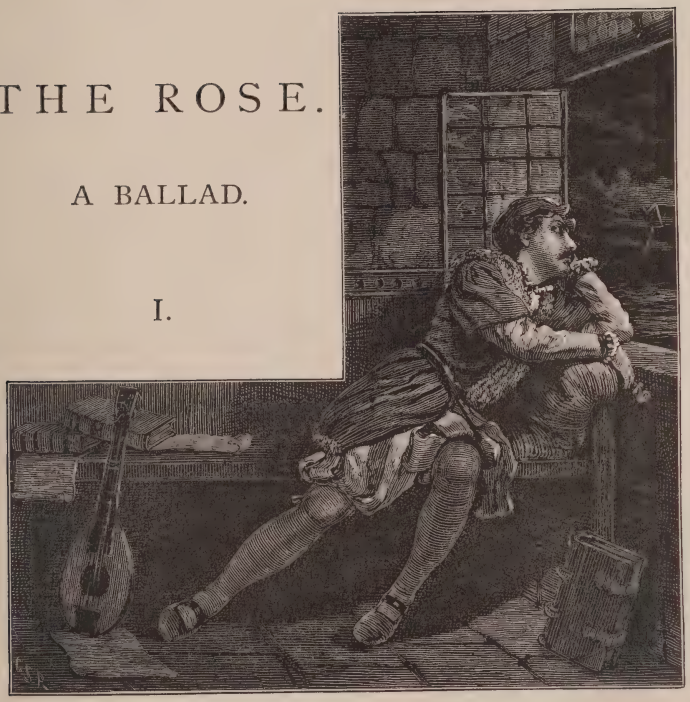


THE ROSE

THE ROSE.

A BALLAD.

I.



In his tower sat the poet

Gazing on the roaring sea,

The Rose.

"Take this rose," he sighed, "and throw it

Where there 's none that loveth me.

On the rock the billow bursteth

And sinks back into the seas,

But in vain my spirit thirsteth

So to burst and be at ease.

Take, O sea! the tender blossom

That hath lain against my breast;

On thy black and angry bosom
It will find a surer rest.
Life is vain, and love is hollow,
Ugly death stands there behind,
Hate and scorn and hunger follow
Him that toileth for his kind."
Forth into the night he hurled it,

And with bitter smile did mark
How the surly tempest whirled it
Swift into the hungry dark.
Foam and spray drive back to leeward,

And the gale, with dreary moan,
Drifts the helpless blossom seaward,
Through the breakers all alone.

II.

Stands a maiden, on the morrow,

Musing by the wave-beat strand,

The Rose.

Half in hope and half in sorrow
Tracing words upon the sand:
"Shall I ever then behold him
Who hath been my life so long,—
Ever to this sick heart fold him,—
Be the spirit of his song?
Touch not, sea, the blessed letters
I have traced upon thy shore,

Spare his name whose spirit fetters
Mine with love forevermore!"

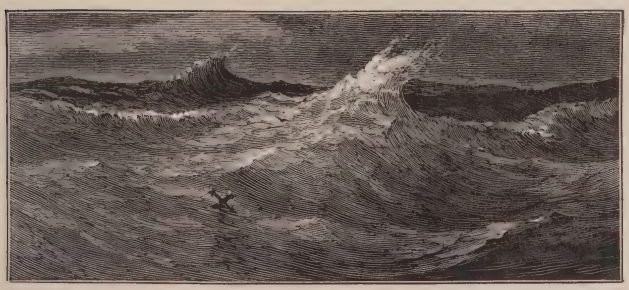
Swells the tide and overflows it,
But, with omen pure and meet,
Brings a little rose, and throws it
Humbly at the maiden's feet.

Full of bliss she takes the token,

And, upon her snowy breast,

Soothes the ruffled petals broken

With the ocean's fierce unrest.



"Love is thine, O heart! and surely

Peace shall also be thine own,

For the heart that trusteth purely

Never long can pine alone."

III.

In his tower sits the poet,

Blisses new and strange to him

Fill his heart and overflow it
With a wonder sweet and dim.
Up the beach the ocean slideth
With a whisper of delight,

And the moon in silence glideth
Through the peaceful blue of night.
Rippling o'er the poet's shoulder

The Rose.

Flows a maiden's golden hair,

Maiden lips, with love grown bolder,

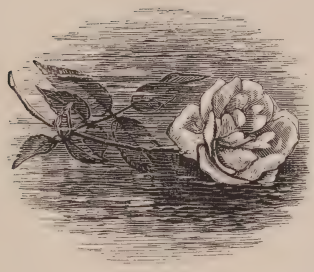
Kiss his moonlit forehead bare.

"Life is joy, and love is power,

Death all fetters doth unbind,

The Rose.

Strength and wisdom only flower
When we toil for all our kind.
Hope is truth, — the future giveth
More than present takes away,
And the soul forever liveth
Nearer God from day to day."
Not a word the maiden uttered,
Fullest hearts are slow to speak,
But a withered rose-leaf fluttered
Down upon the poet's cheek.



BABY BELL

BABY BELL.

I.

Have you not heard the poets tell
How came the dainty Baby Bell
Into this world of ours?
The gates of heaven were left ajar:

Baby Bell.

With folded hands and dreamy eyes,

Wandering out of Paradise,

She saw this planet, like a star,

Hung in the glistening depths of even,—

Its bridges, running to and fro,

O'er which the white-winged Angels go,

Baby Bell.

Bearing the holy Dead to heaven.

She touched a bridge of flowers, — those feet,

So light they did not bend the bells

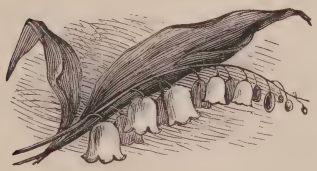
Of the celestial asphodels,

They fell like dew upon the flowers:

Then all the air grew strangely sweet!

And thus came dainty Baby Bell

Into this world of ours.



II.

She came and brought
delicious May.
The swallows built
beneath the eaves;
Like sunlight, in
and out the leaves
The robins went, the livelong day;

Baby Bell.

The lily swung its noiseless bell;

And o'er the porch the trembling vine

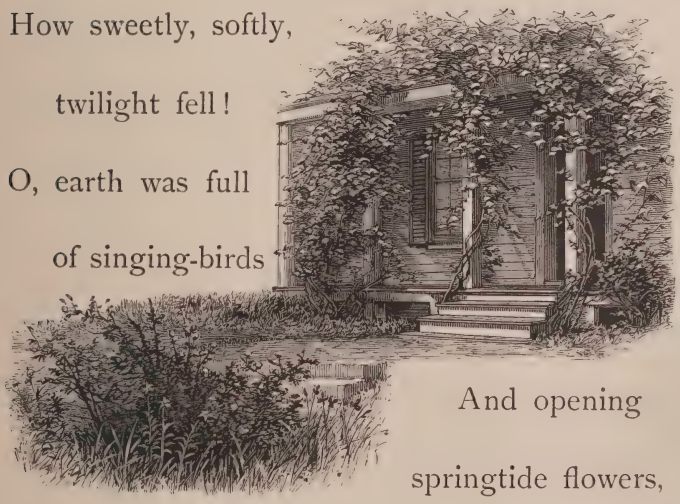
Seemed bursting with its veins of wine.

How sweetly, softly,

twilight fell!

O, earth was full

of singing-birds



And opening

springtide flowers,

When the dainty Baby Bell

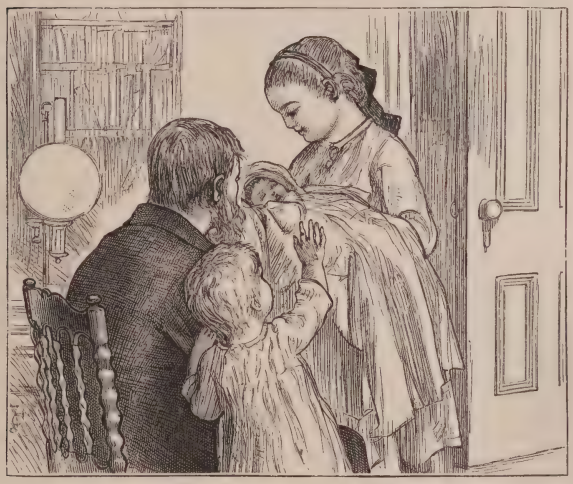
Came to this world of ours!

III.

O Baby, dainty Baby Bell,

How fair she grew from day to day!

What woman-nature filled her eyes,



What poetry within them lay,—

Those deep and tender twilight eyes,

Baby Bell.

So full of meaning, pure and bright
As if she yet stood in the light
Of those oped gates of Paradise.
And so we loved her more and more:
Ah, never in our hearts before
Was love so lovely born!
We felt we had a link between
This real world and that unseen, —

Baby Bell.

The land beyond the morn;

And for the love of those dear eyes,

For love of her whom God led forth,

(The mother's being ceased on earth

When Baby came from Paradise,) —

For love of Him who smote our lives,

And woke the chords of joy and pain,

We said, *Dear Christ!* — our hearts bent down

Like violets after rain.

IV.

And now the orchards, which were white
And red with blossoms when she came,
Were rich in autumn's mellow prime;

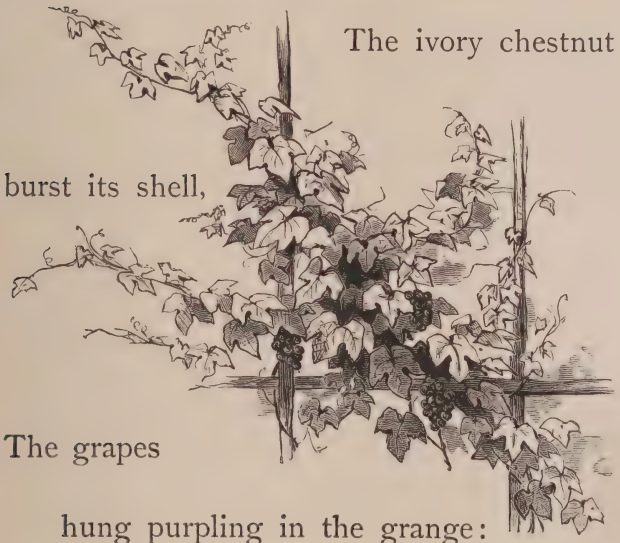
Baby Bell.

The clustered apples burnt like flame,

The soft-cheeked peaches blushed and fell,

The ivory chestnut

burst its shell,



The grapes

hung purpling in the grange:

And time wrought just as rich a change

In little Baby Bell.

Her lissome form more perfect grew,

And in her features we could trace,

In softened curves, her mother's face.

Her angel-nature ripened too:

We thought her lovely when she came,

But she was holy, saintly now . . .

Around her pale angelic brow

We saw a slender ring of flame!

V.

God's hand had taken away the seal
That held the portals of her speech;
And oft she said a few strange words

Whose meaning lay beyond our reach.

She never was a child to us,

We never held her being's key;

We could not teach her holy things:

She was Christ's self in purity.

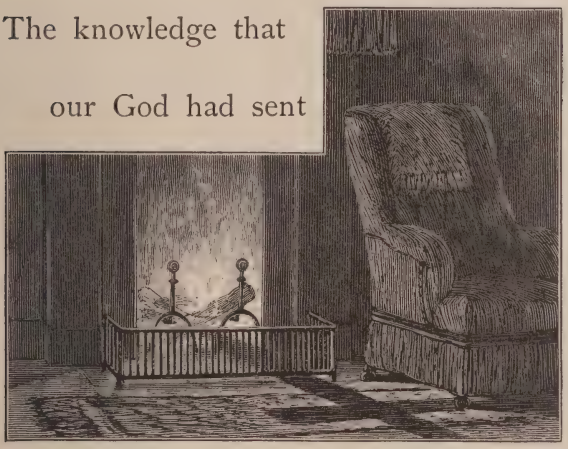
VI.

It came upon us by degrees,

We saw its shadow ere it fell, —

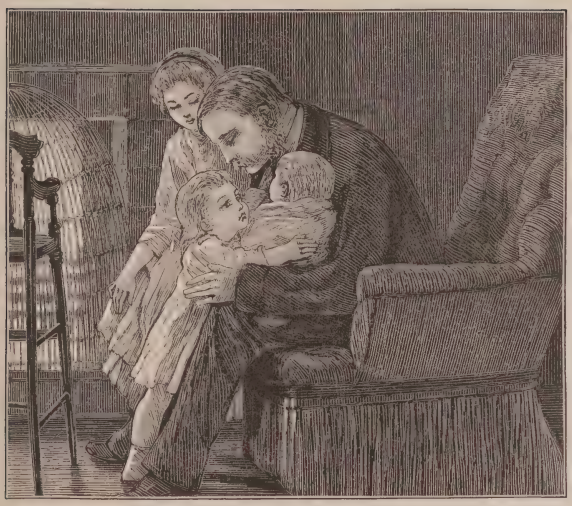
The knowledge that

our God had sent



His messenger for Baby Bell.

We shuddered with unlanguaged pain,



And all our hopes were changed to fears,

And all our thoughts ran into tears

Like sunshine into rain.

We cried aloud in our belief,

Baby Bell.

"O, smite us gently, gently, God!

Teach us to bend and kiss the rod,

And perfect grow through grief."

Ah! how we loved her, God can tell;

Her heart was folded deep in ours.

Our hearts are broken, Baby Bell!

VII.

At last he came, the messenger,

The messenger from unseen lands:

And what did dainty Baby Bell?

Baby Bell.

She only crossed her little hands,

She only looked more meek and fair!

We parted back her silken hair,

We wove the roses round her brow,—

White buds, the summer's drifted snow,—

Wrapt her from head to foot in flowers . . .

And thus went dainty Baby Bell

Out of this world of ours!

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